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111117Z May 01

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DINT-00	DODE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/010W

-----EA50D8 111109Z /38

FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8850
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001584

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR BISA WILLIAMS
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL. 05/07/11

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINS](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MASVINGO TENSE AS CITY BRACES FOR MAYORAL
ELECTION

REF: HARARE 1556

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CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARL IRVING. REASONS: 1.5
B) AND (D).

1. (C) THE VIOLENCE REPORTED REFTEL HAS CONTINUED UNABATED IN MASVINGO TOWN IN THE RUNUP TO THE MAYORAL ELECTION MAY 12-13, WITH CONTINUING SKIRMISHES BETWEEN SUPPORTERS OF THE RULING ZANU-PF AND THOSE OF THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC). ACCORDING TO THE INDEPENDENT "DAILY NEWS," ZANU-PF MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND WAR VETERAN LEADER CHENJERAI "HITLER" HUNZVI IS CIRCULATING WITH AN AK-47 RIFLE, ACCOMPANIED BY OTHER ARMED WAR VETERANS, AS HE SUPERVISES THE LATEST CHAPTER IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ONGOING TERROR CAMPAIGN AGAINST OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS. GANDI MUDZINGWA, PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO MDC PRESIDENT MORGAN TSVANGIRAI, TOLD POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF ON MAY 11 THAT POLICE HAVE ESTABLISHED A HEAVY PRESENCE ON ALL ROADS INTO MASVINGO, AND ARE SEARCHING ALL VEHICLES CARRYING MORE THAN FIVE PASSENGERS. A SENIOR POLICE OFFICIAL IN MASVINGO CONFIRMED TO JOURNALISTS THAT SOME POLICE OFFICERS WERE BEING INVESTIGATED FOR PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY IN ZANU-PF'S "CAMPAIGN TEAMS."

2. (U) ZANU-PF SUPPORTERS REPORTEDLY ORDERED ALL BUSINESSES IN TOWN TO CLOSE ON MAY 10 SO THAT WORKERS COULD ATTEND CAMPAIGN RALLIES ADDRESSED BY VICE-PRESIDENTS SIMON MUZENDA AND JOSEPH MSIKA, AND OTHER SENIOR ZANU-PF OFFICIALS. ONE BUSINESSMAN CONDEMNED THE ACTION, SAYING "IT IS IRRATIONAL FOR A PARTY TO ORDER THE CLOSURE OF ALL BUSINESSES WHEN THE ECONOMY
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OF THE COUNTRY IS AILING." ANOTHER SAID HE HAD BEEN THREATENED BY WAR VETERANS WITH DEATH IF HE DID NOT CLOSE SO HAD HAD NO OTHER CHOICE. MEANWHILE, 18 MDC SUPPORTERS APPEARED IN COURT ON MAY 11 ON CHARGES OF INCITING VIOLENCE AND WERE RELEASED ON BAIL, WHILE FOUR REMAINED IN DETENTION BECAUSE THEY HAD VIOLATED PREVIOUS BAIL RESTRICTIONS. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, NOT A SINGLE ZANU-PF SUPPORTER OR WAR VETERAN HAS BEEN ARRESTED OR CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH THE VIOLENCE WHICH HAS MARRED THE LAST TWO WEEKS OF THE MAYORAL CAMPAIGN, ALTHOUGH FOLLOWERS OF BOTH OF ZIMBABWE'S LARGEST PARTIES HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SKIRMISHES.

3. (C) LONGTIME ZANU-PF POLITICIAN EDDISON ZVOBGO -- WHO HAILS FROM MASVINGO PROVINCE AND RETAINS SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE THERE -- PREDICTED TO CHARGE ON MAY 10 THAT NEITHER ZANU-PF NOR THE MDC WOULD WIN THE MAYORAL ELECTION. RATHER, INDEPENDENT FEMIAS CHAKABUDA WAS THE BEST-KNOWN CANDIDATE IN MASVINGO AND

WOULD LIKELY BE THE VICTOR. CURRENTLY HEAD OF THE CITY'S TAXPAYERS' ASSOCIATION, CHAKABUDA HAD LONGSTANDING TIES TO ZANU-PF AND HAD SERVED ON THE CITY COUNCIL FOR TWENTY YEARS, BUT LEFT THE RULING PARTY IN DISGUST A YEAR AGO TO JOIN THE MDC. HE HAD INTENDED TO RUN ON THE MDC TICKET FOR MAYOR, BUT HIS CANDIDACY WAS NIXED BY THE PARTY'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, WHICH DISTRUSTED HIM BECAUSE OF HIS PREVIOUS POLITICAL AFFILIATION. CHAKABUDA THEN DECIDED TO STAND AS AN INDEPENDENT.

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14. (C) ZVOBGO TOLD CHARGE THAT HE HAD TURNED DOWN A REQUEST FROM VICE-PRESIDENT MSIKA TO CAMPAIGN FOR THE ZANU-PF CANDIDATE. HE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN EVERY ELECTION IN MASVINGO SINCE INDEPENDENCE, SO HIS STANDING ON THE SIDELINES IN THIS CASE WAS IN ITSELF A TELLING STATEMENT. A ZANU-PF LOSS IN THE MAYORAL ELECTION, ZVOBGO ANTICIPATED, WOULD SEND A POWERFUL MESSAGE TO THE RULING PARTY'S OLD GUARD THAT THEY CAN NO LONGER "IMPOSE" CANDIDATES AND LEADERS ON THE ZIMBABWEAN PUBLIC. THE PEOPLE OF MASVINGO, ZVOBGO SAID, ARE "ENORMOUSLY DISENCHANTED" WITH PRESIDENT MUGABE, WHO COULD LOSE THE PROVINCE IN THE 2002 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

COMMENT

15. (C) WE ARE NOT SURPRISED BY THE FERVOR WITH WHICH ZANU-PF AND THE MDC ARE CONTESTING THIS MUNICIPAL ELECTION. THE POLITICAL STAKES ARE VERY HIGH IN MASVINGO, WHICH MOST OBSERVERS CONSIDER THE KEY BATTLEGROUND PROVINCE IN NEXT YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. AS WE INDICATED IN REFTTEL, ZANU-PF WANTS TO PROVE IT CAN CARRY AN URBAN AREA, AND THE WINNING

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P 111117Z MAY 01
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PARTY WILL TRUMPET A VICTORY AS PROOF THAT IT HAS THE
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MOMENTUM HEADING INTO 2002. IF, HOWEVER, ZVOBGO IS RIGHT ABOUT THE OUTCOME -- AND HE KNOWS THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN MASVINGO BETTER THAN ANY OTHER ZIMBABWEAN POLITICIAN -- NEITHER PARTY WILL BE ABLE TO CLAIM IT HAS THE UPPER HAND AFTER THIS WEEKEND'S VOTING.

IRVING

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